

## ACROSS THE ATLANTIC IN A SAILING-SHIP.

By "THE WOMAN WHO WENT."



SIX weeks in a sailing vessel! This experience is, I think, comparatively rare, at least among "audible" women or our own day. I have tossed for six weeks on the Atlantic in a sailing-vessel!

Aye, and it was a small sailing-vessel, manned only by three officers and sixteen men. It carried no stewardess. It was not prepared for passenger traffic, and my husband and I were the only passengers.

"How came we in this boat?" you may well ask, seeing that splendidly equipped and rapid steamers were making the same voyage.

It came about in this wise. My husband was ordered an ocean voyage. We were medically warned that it was the best chance for prolonging his life. Then what was to be done? A week's voyage on an Atlantic steamer would have been of little avail. The longer steamer voyages to the Cape or to Australia would have taken us very far from home without any possibility of rapid return if desirable. There were some, aged and failing, who could well spare our presence for a while, but between whom and ourselves we did not feel it was quite kind or dutiful to leave a great ocean gulf fixed.

We were young things, and had nobody to give us practical advice. All we could do was to marshal the facts of our case.

To begin with, my husband, though of delicate health, was a splendid sailor. I had not had much sea experience, but so far, my own record was good.

Then it seemed to us that the quiet of a sailing vessel, with its absence of artificial heat and offensive smell, would be favourable conditions.

We had friends in Canada, and the prospect of any number of introductions. So we decided "We will go out leisurely in a sailing

vessel, and then if we wish we can return in one week by any of the steamer lines."

Before visiting any of the shipping offices we went down to the docks for a personal inspection of vessels bound on this journey.

We had some quaint experiences—strange peeps into unexpected ways of life. For one, we found ourselves on an American ship with a beautifully fitted up little saloon, where the captain received us very genially and was quite ready to answer our inquiries and consider our position. He was part owner of his vessel and really lived on it with his wife and two little children, attended by a smiling, delightfully clean pair, steward and stewardess, both negroes. He was half-inclined to take us himself (and I think the stewardess wished he would), but he finally decided there was not room.

Our next "call" was made in a very well-equipped vessel. The captain was a fine-looking, sturdy little Welshman, who was seated in his saloon using the very strongest language to two young men, apparently his first officer and the steward. It was not a good first impression, but it was remarkable to see how calmly the two men received the fiery oration, and how neat and orderly the place was. My husband explained what we were searching for, scarcely, however, using even an interrogative tone. The little captain suspended his monologue, looked keenly at us both, and then said, in exactly the same voice in which he had poured out his objurgations—

"Go you on to the next vessel to this—the *Three Rivers*, and if you take my advice and he'll take ye, you'll make terms with that captain. I know what will do for you. He's the right man for you. Tell him I sent ye."

Whereon, without another word, he turned back to his account-book and his fiery upbraidings. But I have always felt a grateful respect for that little man. For we followed his advice, and certainly had he been a friend of twenty years he could not have pointed out "the right man" better than he did.

The *Three Rivers* was not prepared for passengers, but its honest, kind-looking captain seemed somehow drawn to the idea of taking us in, and promised to prepare a cabin for us. Of course we could expect no luxury. The ship's carpenter would knock us up berths in a compartment which had hitherto been used as a store-room, and which, like the cabins of the captain and the mates, opened upon the little saloon. With them we would have to take our meals, and our sole attendant was to be the bustling little steward. As I have said, there was no stewardess, nor would there be any woman on board but myself—a fact which distressed my husband a little as involving possible hardship for me, but to which I would give no heed, since everything else on the *Three Rivers* seemed exactly what we wished. I afterwards thought that all the kindness shown us was the more striking, because sailors have a superstitious horror of deaths and funerals at sea; and when our voyage terminated successfully the captain frankly told us both that "he should not have been surprised had my husband died on the third day out."

We slept on board on Saturday night, for the ship was to drop down the Thames early on Sunday. I had high youthful hopes in the success of our endeavour, but I own that, when I felt myself fairly cut off from land, a great dread swept down upon me lest, instead of renewed health, the voyage might bring speedy death, and I be left to land alone on a strange shore, and worst of all, to return alone!

True, that dread did not last very long, for

even a few hours brought such an accession of energy and bloom to my dear fellow-traveller, that hopes flourished as to what days and weeks might do. But I think my strictly secret terror, joined to the agitation and fatigue preceding our departure, had in reaction a baleful effect on me. Without that, I do not think I should have broken down as I did. I learned what *mal de mer* is in its very worst form, and it was complicated by tic-doloureux which came on every night. Throughout the voyage I never slept more than two hours at a time, while for days, which lengthened into weeks, I could not even lift my head from my pillow, and could take no food except what was put into my mouth.

During that terrible time I lived on fore-castle biscuits, great, strong, rough, brown things, which I lay and chewed and mumbled as a baby does over its coral. For dainties, I had onions cut down in vinegar with pepper and salt! Why this extraordinary diet, you may well inquire? It was simply the diet discovered experimentally to be what I could take! I eschewed the finer biscuits of the saloon-table. I loathed the sight of the steward's daintiest soups.

It was strange how, lying in my berth, my head close to the ship's side, I could hear a sound as of a bell tolling beneath the waters. Under such circumstances one readily understands how sailors' "yarns" originate.

My husband and the steward tried to get me on deck when possible. But the weather was dead against us. We had rough, contrary winds, and storm followed after storm. The last was really an awful experience. The tossings of the vessel were so acute that I was getting bruised against the edge of my berth, and a 'portmanteau was put in beside me to keep me steady. No cooking could be carried on—the fuel from the little stove flew out upon the saloon floor. The waves came pouring even into our cabin, floating some articles which we had unwarily left on the floor. Through my cabin door I could hear conversation going on outside, and I heard the captain say—

"Steward, we shall do well if we get through this."

I was not frightened, not through any courage, but because my physical misery was great. The thought of our going out of the world together did not seem an overpowering trial compared with the great anguish with whose terrors I had contended.

Towards night the storm grew worse. The sailors tramped overhead unceasingly, and the ship groaned and strained as if she were to be rent in twain. Our light was out and we lay in silence and darkness. Long afterwards my husband used to recall how my voice reached him in the anxious whisper—

"Do those at home know where our insurance papers are?"

Suddenly there was a terrific sound, accompanied with wild, yelling cries. My husband sprang from his berth to see if he could find an explanation. He met the steward entering the saloon. The man at the wheel had lost his control. It had knocked him down. The captain caught and held it, though in doing so he received such injuries that he had to take to his bed as soon as the storm was fairly over.

That contretemps brought us face to face with another risk. Both of the mates of the *Three Rivers* held captain's certificates, but neither of them had ever before been on that route!

After that great storm we had a lull, though a sailing vessel still suffers pretty

severely until the great waves have had time to subside. Then followed a calm. Day after day we made scarcely any progress, and we realised the awful monotony of a shoreless ocean. My illness had left me very weak, I looked like a ghost, and I lost most of my hair, yet presently my enjoyment in life began to return. I lay for hours on deck on a mattress. I exhausted all the books we had brought with us, and the captain's little store. And I did some elaborately complicated crochet which survives, I believe, to this day. When I was tired, I used to watch the clouds, which seemed to accompany us day by day and to vary wonderfully little. There was one which I liked to imagine was in the form of an angel bending over us. We had magnificent sunsets nearly every evening. And early in September, being in a fairly high latitude we saw a magnificent aurora borealis, which I can only describe in Shelley's phrase "a dome of many-coloured glass."

In the evenings we played whist, the steward being invited to take a hand with the captain and ourselves. I had never played before, and learned the game then. The captain was generally my partner and I must have sorely tried his patience, but he was always kind and tolerant, and strong on the theory that "luck goes with the beginner."

We had three kittens on board—two black ones, which one of the owners of the vessel had presented as good omens, and a little tabby and white kitten which the mate had picked up, astray, in Ratcliff Highway. Everybody was very fond of these little creatures, and the sailors used to teach them tricks. All three had been sea-sick at the start, coming into my cabin and making pitiful moans. But they speedily recovered.

Our captain was a very interesting companion, full of sea-lore and fable, and evidently very fond of his wife and little children. Everything was always put in good order for Sunday, and one of my special memories is of lying in my berth, in the rough weather, and hearing the captain and my husband join in singing the hundredth psalm, holding on, meanwhile, to the dining table.

The steward as he knelt before the little cabin fire, toasting little Sunday dainties, used to make time calculations as to the hour it would be in London and what his children would be doing. There was a strong vein of sentiment in these honest hardy men. It was wonderful to see what simple little stories they would sit and read with the greatest enjoyment.

Among the sixteen in the fore-castle, there were men from nearly every country. But all alike had a pleasant word and smile for the woman so strangely placed on their vessel, and all anxious that she should see everything that might break the monotony of the voyage. Among them were two stowaways, who appeared as soon as the pilot had left the ship in the English Channel. The captain said he could almost reckon on having stowaways, and often they were decent fellows. He lectured them, set them to work, and generally contrived to make them worth a small bonus when the ship got into port.

Yet I have carried away a vivid idea of the hardships and risks of a merchant seaman's life even where the captain is not only reasonable, but kind!

Unfortunately, our first and second mate were at daggers drawn. They were men between whom antipathy would be instinctive, and this was accentuated by the fact that the second mate was popular and the first mate was hated. I remember when we reached Canada and the customs officers came on board, one of them asked the steward, "Where was your first officer brought up?" To which the little man tartly replied, "He was brought up nowhere, sir; he was dragged up in Hull." I remember once, at dinner, this said first mate announced that in his opinion, in case of fire or shipwreck the captain and sailors should save themselves first; his point of view being that they were compelled to be at sea, but that passengers were there by their own choice, and must take the consequences! "Na, na, sir," rejoined the captain, "it's the captain's duty to stick to the ship till every soul is off her, and truth to say," he added, with a

humorous twinkle in his pawky grey eye, "When the worst comes, I'm no sure but the ship's the safest place too, after all!"

The second mate, on the other hand, was a reckless, good-humoured fellow, one of the sort, whom many like, but who break the hearts of those who love them. He was wasting his life and knew it, and had his moments of intense bitterness.

The animosity between these two culminated one day in a free fight in the saloon, which set me shrieking in my cabin, and brought the captain, my husband, the steward and the carpenter promptly on the scene. All the sympathy of the crew was with the second mate, and indeed at one time the captain was half afraid lest there should be mutiny against his chief officer. Probably only his own personal popularity held it in check. Things did indeed look suspicious when the carpenter, a clever, superior man,—himself holding a master's certificate—to whom the chief mate had behaved most overbearingly, volunteered to execute some ship's repair by utilising the ship's handcuffs!—pretending that he did not know what they were. The captain took them from him and kept them in his own cabin for the remainder of the voyage.

During the last fortnight of our journey we had some very happy times. The weather was perfect, and the pure bracing breezes had done for us the very utmost we could have hoped. We were in sight of land too, the low, thickly-wooded mysterious island of Anticosti, the shores of the St. Lawrence, to which we were often near enough to see their cheery little French Canadian towns, to say nothing of the great solemn cliffs of the Saguenay River.

When in due time we landed at Quebec, we could truly say that we thanked God for our good adventure, though had we known all its course beforehand, perhaps we would not have dared to risk it.

That's the way with a great deal in life, and that's why the future is hidden. God covers our eyes with one hand, while He guides us with the other.



## IN A FOG.

By SARAH DOUDNEY.

MAY SORRELL was very miserable. It would have been better for her if she had frankly admitted the fact to herself; but she would not. Even in the solitude of her little room she refused to own the truth; and yet her heart was breaking. A burst of tears would have relieved her, but she kept them back as sternly as if a crowd had been looking on. No one had forced her to tread the path which lay before her feet; she had entered it with a resolute will, and no foolish yearnings for the past could turn her from the way that she had chosen. Always she had prided herself on the firmness of her character; but at twenty one does not know very well what one's character really is, and the vaunted firmness had only of late been put to the test.

In September she had come up to London, quite alone, and without a friend in the great city to be her guide. She had seen an advertisement, stating that a lady in Mulberry Gardens, N.W. received boarders on moderate terms, and had gone to a stranger's house with that confidence which is the special blessing, or bane, of perfect ignorance of the world. Fortunately, the confidence was not misplaced; Miss Palmer was a good woman, getting her living in an honest way, and taking care of the young women who put themselves into her hands. May Sorrell gave her the required references, and arrived on a golden autumn day when the trees in Mulberry Gardens were dropping yellow leaves in the sunshine, and busy workers were coming back from their summer holidays.

She had not been so miserable just then. The strength of her purpose and the novelty of her surroundings sustained her.

In October she had entered the Royal Academy of Music as a student, and begun to work in right earnest. Her voice, a sweet contralto, had been the delight of her small circle of friends at Saltstone, and she was full of high hopes and dreams of success. But other girls had sweet contralto voices, and knew how to use them. They made May feel small, and she saw their noses turning up at her on all sides. In her wiser moments she doubted if the noses had ever really turned up; it is so easy to mistake the expression of a nose, and think ill of humanity. But she was only too ready to believe the worst.

Then came the dismal days of November,